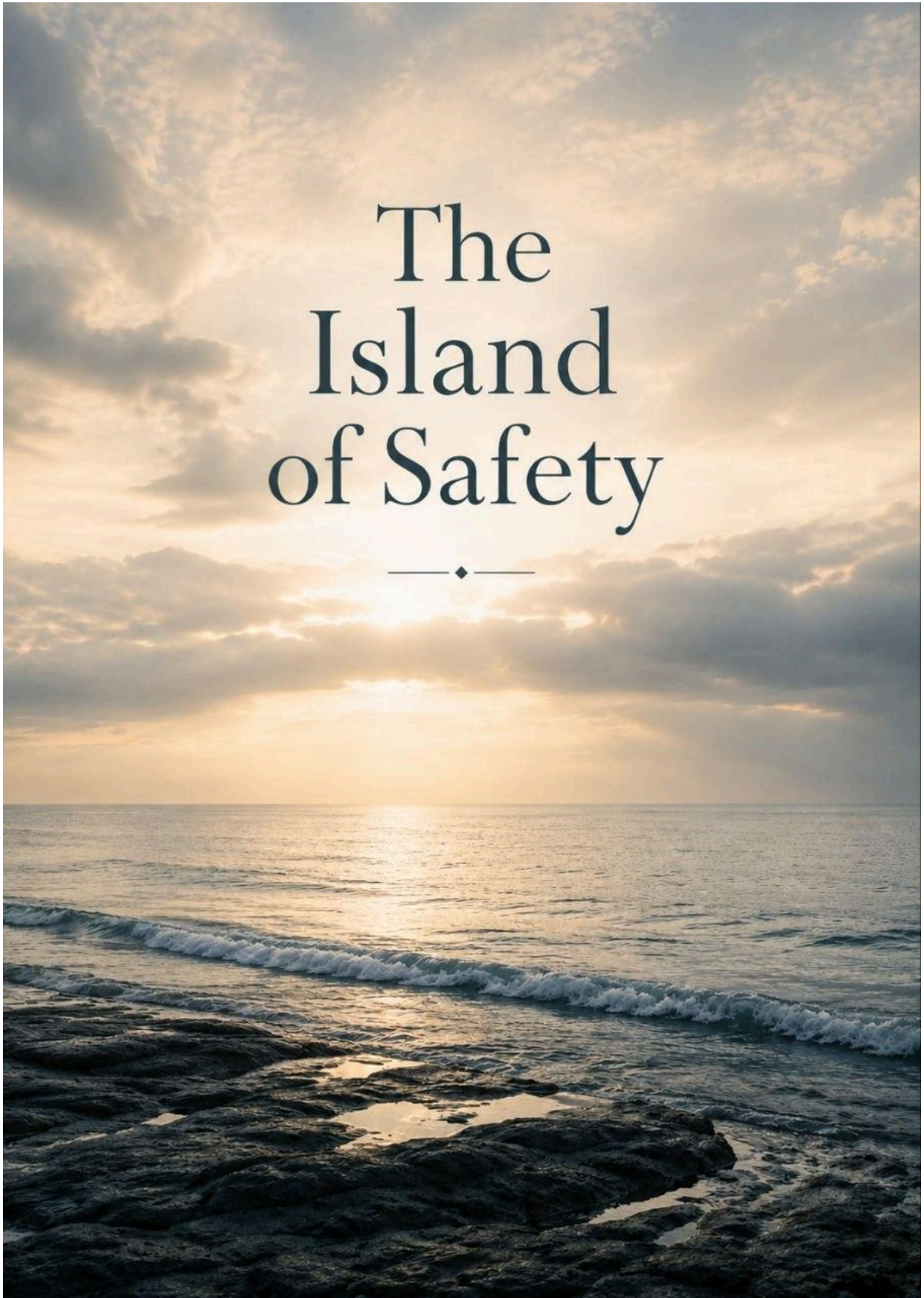


The Island of Safety



The Island of Safety

(Hillside Hermitage Talk no.8ohh - Adapted for readability by Thaniyo bhikkhu; content reflects the original recorded Dhamma discussion.)

[YouTube](#)

[Sutta Nipāta 5.11 Kappamānavapucchā](#)

[Samyutta Nikāya 22.43 Attadīpasutta](#)

When greed, hatred, and delusion arise, there is a common assumption that these states must be prevented from manifesting. You recognize that these things are unwholesome, and because you are unable to prevent them from arising, you believe you are failing or moving backwards. This is the wrong assumption. You are trying to prevent things from manifesting in the first place, but that is not on you. That cannot be on you.

When you fail to see where your responsibility lies, you overdo the aspect of trying to get rid of unwholesome states. By attempting to prevent them, you bind yourself to them. You become like a dog that runs around a post trying to get away from it; the dog ends up being tied tighter and closer to the post.

The manifestation itself is not the problem. The manifestation is not the greed itself; it is the prospect of greed being presented. The problem is you acting out of greed or aversion. It is you choosing to act by body, speech, or mind, delighting in the manifestation and welcoming it. That is your doing.

If you truly had a say as to what appears and what does not, these things would not have arisen in the first place. They arise on their own. You have no say, yet you act as if you do because you think the problem is in the manifestation rather than in your attitude toward it. This is where sense restraint applies.

Sense restraint is not preventing things from arising; it's the abandoning of acting out of the craving-pressure towards them. Being restrained means interfering less with the manifestation of things.

The Doorway of Choice and Responsibility

Manifestations cannot burst forth unless you choose to act out of them. The pressure to act might be there, but no amount of pressure can make a choice for you. It is always you who chooses to act out of the pressure, which means you can also choose not to act.

You are the guardian of the doorway through which the pressure can express itself. You are the one who opens the door, or does not. Not knowing that, it feels as if the action of acting out comes automatically out of the pressure.

You must discern the line for which you are responsible, the line you do not cross. Consider the simile of a town surrounded by a wall with only one point of entry and exit. If you want to keep track of what is going on inside, you do not need to chase people who come in or go after people who go out. You just stay at the doorway.

This is the doorway of the mindful context in regard to feelings, perceptions, and intentions. It is not a doorway of focusing on the tip of your nose where you are not aware of anything else. That is staring at the woodwork of the doorway without seeing who walks through it. You must see whatever has manifested itself and know it has manifested to this extent.

You must take responsibility for your choices. Do not deny the choice in hindsight by claiming, “There is no self, so this choice couldn't have been mine.” When you make a choice rooted in greed, aversion, or delusion, there is conceit; there is a sense of “I am.” It is your choice. The choice is always yours.

Through that sense of responsibility for the slightest choice you make, you can eventually overcome the ownership of the choice and the responsibility with it. You remove the ownership of responsibility by refusing to deny responsibility.

Stop engaging with things by trying to prevent the basis for your choices. Discern where *your doing* is, and then stop doing that.

Discerning the Limits of the Shoreline

When you stop interfering, there is just an arising and passing away, the same as waves striking the seashore. When a wave comes in and finally reaches the shoreline, it disintegrates and vanishes. The wave goes no further than the limit of the shoreline. In the same way, nothing can go beyond the limits established by your own awareness. Nothing can enter through that door, because you realize nothing could have ever entered. It was you who was going out through the door and being affected by things outside. It was you stepping from the shore into the water that is hit by the waves.

The mind can arise in all shapes and forms, whichever way it wants. That is not the problem. You welcoming it, entertaining it, or trying to get rid of it is the problem. If you stop doing that, the basis for acts of greed still arises, but there is no greed. Greed comes from you; it does not come from things.

The waves continue to come and go. You do not get wet anymore because you do not go outside where the waves are. You do not fight the sea to remain dry; you see the range of the wave and leave it alone.

Finding the place where those elements cannot set foot is Nibbāna, the unmanifested, the unborn. The island is revealed by the waves. Nibbāna is outlined by the sea; from whatever is manifested, Nibbāna is outlined by being the opposite of that.

You recognize that a manifestation cannot be owned because it is anicca. It is dukkha because it lacks the pleasure connected with mastery over things. Because of that, it cannot be yours; hence, it is anattā.

Human existence is a discrepancy between how things actually are and how you take them to be. Any degree of discrepancy determines the degree of liability toward dukkha. Where there is no discrepancy, there is no basis for dukkha.

In the seen, there is just the seen. Lust, aversion, and delusion are not in the seen; they are in your attitude toward it. Remove the attitude, and you extinguish the discrepancy.

Sutta Nipāta 5.11

Kappamāṇavapucchā: Kappa's Question

"For those standing in the middle of the stream,"
(said the venerable Kappa),
"when a flood of great danger has arisen;
for those overcome by old age and death,
declare an island to me, sir.
And explain that island to me,
so that there may be no other beyond this."

The Bhagavā Declares the Island

"For those standing in the middle of the stream,"
(said the Bhagavā to Kappa),
"when a flood of great danger has arisen;
for those overcome by old age and death,
I declare an island to you, Kappa.

Owning nothing and taking nothing,
this is the island, and there is no other.
I call it Nibbāna,
the destruction of old age and death.

Those who, having understood this, are endowed with sati,
are completely quenched in this visible dhamma.
They do not fall under the power of Māra,
nor are they the servants of Māra."

Saṃyutta Nikāya 22.43

Attadīpasutta: Self-Island

Originating at Sāvatthī.

"Dwell with yourselves as an island, with yourselves as a refuge, with no other refuge.
Dwell with the dhammā as an island, with the dhammā as a refuge, with no other refuge.

For those dwelling with themselves as an island, with themselves as a refuge, with no other refuge, and with the dhammā as an island, with the dhammā as a refuge, with no other refuge, the origin must be carefully investigated: 'From what are sorrow, lamentation, dukkha, domanassa, and despair born? From what are they produced?'

Now, from what *are* sorrow, lamentation, dukkha, domanassa, and despair born?
From what are they produced?

Regarding the Aggregates as Self

Here, an uninstructed ordinary person—who is not a seer of the noble ones, who is unskilled in the noble dhammā, and who is undisciplined in the noble dhammā; who is not a seer of true persons, who is unskilled in the true persons' dhammā, and who is undisciplined in the true persons' dhammā—regards form as self, or regards self as possessing form, or regards form as in self, or regards self as in form.

For him, that form changes and becomes otherwise. From the change and alteration of form, sorrow, lamentation, dukkha, domanassa, and despair arise for him.

He regards feeling as self, or regards self as possessing feeling, or regards feeling as in self, or regards self as in feeling.

For him, that feeling changes and becomes otherwise. From the change and alteration of feeling, sorrow, lamentation, dukkha, domanassa, and despair arise for him.

He regards perception as self, or regards self as possessing perception, or regards perception as in self, or regards self as in perception.

For him, that perception changes and becomes otherwise. From the change and alteration of perception, sorrow, lamentation, dukkha, domanassa, and despair arise for him.

He regards sankharas as self, or regards self as possessing sankharas, or regards sankharas as in self, or regards self as in sankharas.

For him, those sankharas change and become otherwise. From the change and alteration of sankharas, sorrow, lamentation, dukkha, domanassa, and despair arise for him.

He regards consciousness as self, or regards self as possessing consciousness, or regards consciousness as in self, or regards self as in consciousness.

For him, that consciousness changes and becomes otherwise. From the change and alteration of consciousness, sorrow, lamentation, dukkha, domanassa, and despair arise for him.

The Path of Dispassion

However, having known the anicca nature, the change, the fading away, and the cessation of form, he sees this exactly as it actually is with right wisdom: 'Formerly and now, all form is anicca, dukkha, and a changing dhammā.' For the one who sees this, whatever sorrow, lamentation, dukkha, domanassa, and despair there were, they are abandoned.

From abandoning them, he is not agitated. Being unagitated, he dwells at ease. A bhikkhu dwelling at ease is called 'quenched in that respect.'

However, having known the anicca nature, the change, the fading away, and the cessation of feeling, he sees this exactly as it actually is with right wisdom: 'Formerly and now, all feeling is anicca, dukkha, and a changing dhammā.' For the one who sees this, whatever sorrow, lamentation, dukkha, domanassa, and despair there were, they are abandoned.

From abandoning them, he is not agitated. Being unagitated, he dwells at ease. A bhikkhu dwelling at ease is called 'quenched in that respect.'

However, having known the anicca nature, the change, the fading away, and the cessation of perception, he sees this exactly as it actually is with right wisdom: 'Formerly and now, all perception is anicca, dukkha, and a changing dhammā.' For the one who sees this, whatever sorrow, lamentation, dukkha, domanassa, and despair there were, they are abandoned.

From abandoning them, he is not agitated. Being unagitated, he dwells at ease. A bhikkhu dwelling at ease is called 'quenched in that respect.'

However, having known the anicca nature, the change, the fading away, and the cessation of sankharas, he sees this exactly as it actually is with right wisdom: 'Formerly and now, all sankharas are anicca, dukkha, and a changing dhammā.' For the one who sees this, whatever sorrow, lamentation, dukkha, domanassa, and despair there were, they are abandoned.

From abandoning them, he is not agitated. Being unagitated, he dwells at ease. A bhikkhu dwelling at ease is called 'quenched in that respect.'

However, having known the anicca nature, the change, the fading away, and the cessation of consciousness, he sees this exactly as it actually is with right wisdom: 'Formerly and now, all consciousness is anicca, dukkha, and a changing dhammā.' For the one who sees this, whatever sorrow, lamentation, dukkha, domanassa, and despair there were, they are abandoned.

From abandoning them, he is not agitated. Being unagitated, he dwells at ease. A bhikkhu dwelling at ease is called 'quenched in that respect.'"
